

How to do extension in forestry in BC: EXTENSION 101

A plain language summary of the academic article, "How extension enhances the knowledge and practice of innovative silviculture in British Columbia, Canada" authored by Dr. Kira Hoffman, Gillian Chow-Fraser, Dr. Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, and Dr. Jodi N. Axelson with the Silviculture Innovation Program.

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What is Extension?

Extension connects users of knowledge with its producers, helping ensure that information is relevant, practical, and impactful. Its strength lies in bridging theory and practice by bringing together experiential, anecdotal, and/or oral knowledge with research. Extension outputs include activities (e.g., workshops, training, product development) to support information sharing, learning and decision-making for forest practitioners. Outcomes of extension may include short-term learnings, medium-term actions and long-term changes to broader societal conditions across the forest sector and the public.

Why Do We Need Extension in Forestry?

Forest practitioners today are faced with managing forests in complex ecological, economic, cultural, and social contexts. Extension can help practitioners feel equipped to navigate these contexts and the diverse forms of knowledge required to do so.

Extension work can be hard to define but once it is recognized, it becomes easier to value its contribution, build capacity, and identify opportunities where extension enhances outcomes.

FOREST PRACTITIONERS | Professionals, researchers, Guardians and stewards involved in the management, conservation and sustainable use of forest ecosystems.

What Does Extension Look Like?

Extension is an ongoing activity that blends **knowledge exchange** and **communication skills**, such as: relationship-building, translating technical information, and tailoring content for specific audiences. Extension may look different based on how actively knowledge users and producers interact.

WHAT TO EXPECT in this extension note



- A **high-level overview** on "Extension in Forestry"
- Short answers to **commonly asked questions** on the topic
- An **infographic** on the different types of extension
- **Guiding questions** when undertaking extension



Forms of Extension

We describe **five different forms of extension**: one-way knowledge sharing, two-way knowledge exchange, participatory exchange, co-produced knowledge generation and anticipatory knowledge generation (Figure 1). **One-way knowledge sharing, two-way knowledge exchange and participatory exchange** are forms of extension where there is relevant knowledge, whereas knowledge gaps are being filled by collaborators in **co-produced knowledge generation and anticipatory knowledge generation**.

While one- and two-way sharing makes knowledge accessible, participatory, co-produced, and anticipatory extension can empower forest practitioners by fostering collaboration, building trust, and generating shared understanding.

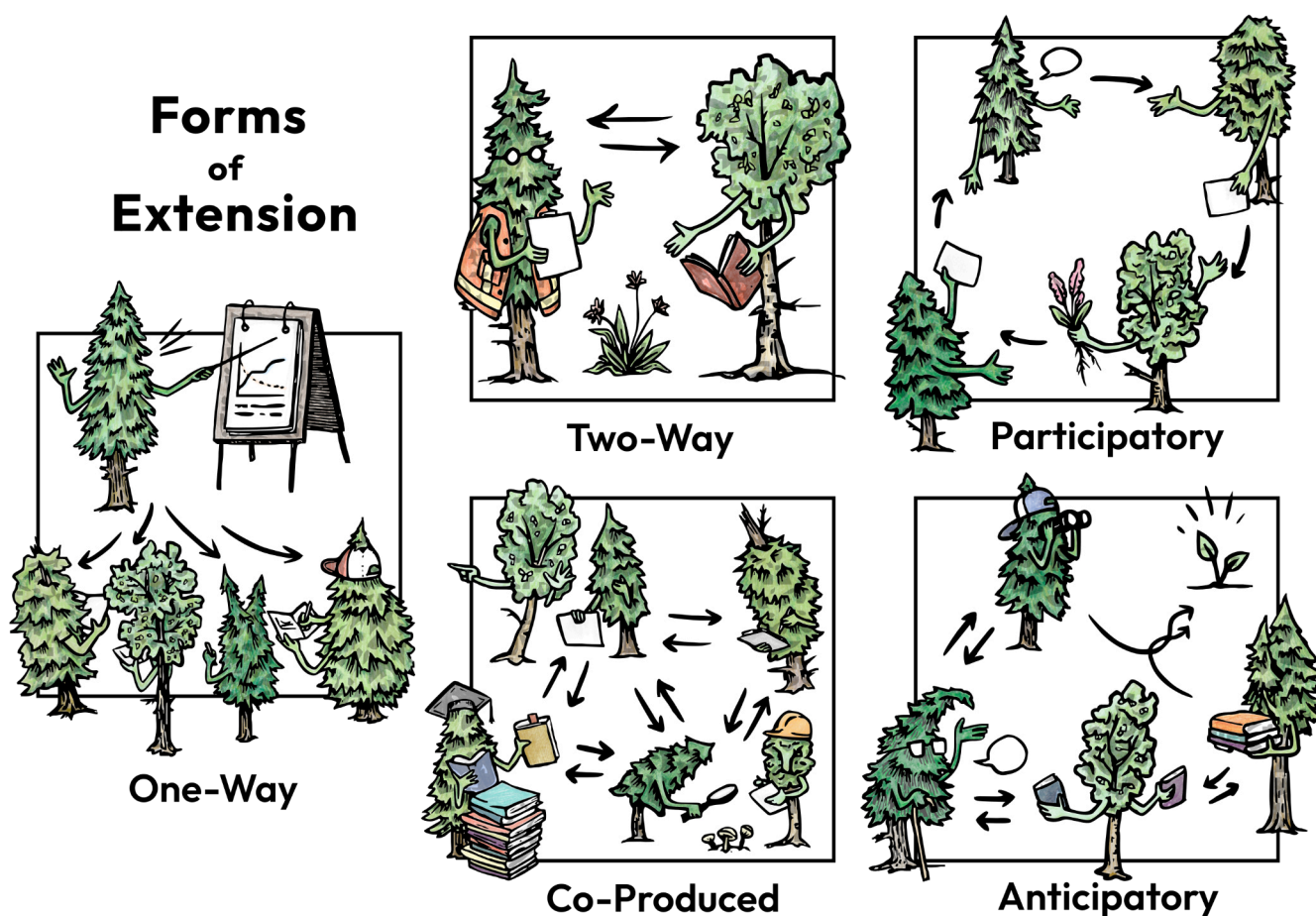


Figure 1. The five forms of extension vary in the ways knowledge is produced and shared.

Illustration by Laura Stanton, Silviculture Innovation Program

Goals of Extension

There are many potential **short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of extension**.

In the **short-term**, extension aims to improve access to and awareness of relevant knowledge; strengthen connections among mentors, early-career professionals, and knowledge holders; and support the development of skills aligned with values-based forest management.

Medium-term outcomes focus on fostering a culture that embraces innovation, experimentation, and learning, building stronger and more diverse communities of practice, and expanding training opportunities—particularly in the use of specialized equipment—while increasing leadership roles for First Nations.

In the **long-term**, extension seeks to influence systemic change by supporting policies that promote innovation, developing local markets that make innovative practices more economically viable, and advancing greater decision-making power for First Nations in forest stewardship and management.



Guiding Questions for Undertaking Extension

- What knowledge already exists and what are the gaps that need to be filled with knowledge co-production?
- Who needs it and how can it be shared effectively?
- What format makes it usable and respectful?
- What knowledge leads to desired short-, medium- and long-term changes?
- How can we value and support extension through dedicated training, time, and opportunities?



What Are the Benefits of Extension?

- Connects scientific knowledge with Indigenous and community-based systems, often resulting in more inclusive and holistic approaches.
- Aligns practical needs of forestry practitioners with applied research, which makes research outcomes relevant and impactful.
- Plays a role in thoughtfully reflecting diverse forest values in planning and operations.
- Builds capacity across the sector and supports shared learning among professionals, communities, and knowledge holders.

Why Do We Need Extension for Innovative Silviculture in BC?

An emerging focus in forestry is on “innovative silviculture,” using silviculture to manage forests as complex adaptive systems by embracing diversity through time and space. This approach requires a more adaptable and diversified “toolbox” of forest management practices. Extension plays a vital role in connecting values, knowledge and tools. It enables a deeper understanding of both community and ecological values, which empowers decisions on the best tools and knowledge systems for the scenario, and ensures the tools are applied effectively in response to evolving technologies and site-specific needs.

*For more resources on Extension, visit
<https://sip.bvcentre.ca/resources>*